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ABSTRACT

The planning process at a major public university over a 10-year period is examined. Planning is conceptualized as a political process, and attention is directed to comprehensive, institutional academic planning. The institution undertook three distinct planning efforts, and each of the three chronological periods was distinct in approach, principal characters, and outcome. Each period is evaluated in relation to product and process dimensions. Attention was focused on institutional mission, the level of faculty participation, and the quality of academic leadership. The case study method was used, and data for each analysis were developed in three steps: interviews, document analysis, and informal discussions. The institution made no progress in developing a consensus on institutional mission as a result of initial planning The effort was further characterized by almost no faculty participation until late in the process, and there was disagreement on what the role of the faculty in academic planning should be. During 1972-1974, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) was unable to serve as an effective leader due to personal style and the official's concept of administrative responsibility and view of the college. During 1975-1976 the college president retained control over the planning process and selected a blue ribbon committee of faculty, which studied the university. This planning process also lacked a clear sense of institutional mission. Although the planning committee was mostly faculty, it was a small group and did not adopt a widespread consultative or participatory process. No recommendations resulted from the plan that was produced. During 1976-1980, a new VPAA came to the campus and was responsible for developing an academic plan, which resulted in fairly wide consensus. However, the VPAA did not remain at the university to implement the plan. (SW)

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A CASE STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING PROCESS

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THE ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

This paper was presented at the Twenty-Second Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Denver Hilton Hotel in Denver, Colorado, May 16-19, 1982. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum papers.

D. R. Coleman, Chairman
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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a case study analysis of the planning process at a major university over a ten-year period. It is unique because, unlike previous studies which have dealt with the planning process in either a technical or a superficial manner, this study conceptualized planning as a political process. The selected institution launched three distinct planning efforts during this time, offering a microcosm for study. Studying the same institution over time provided a setting in which certain variables are stable and facilitated comparisons which would not have been possible among different institutions. These comparisons added to the understanding of those factors which contributed to the success or failure of the effort.

This paper reports a case study analysis of the planning process at a major public university over a ten-year period. It is unique because, unlike previous studies which have dealt with the planning process in either a technical or superficial manner, it conceptualizes planning as a political process. The selected institution launched three distinct planning efforts during this time, offering a microcosm for study. Studying the same institution over time provided a setting in which certain variables were stable and, facilitated comparisons which could not have been possible among different institutions. These comparisions added to the understanding of those factors which contributed to the success or failure of the effort.

The focus of this study was on comprehensive institutional academic planning. Comprehensive, in the sense of examining the way an institution integrates its various subunits. Planning as it occurs in the individual subunits is not without its importance, but, for purposes of this study, was dealt with only as it related to overall planning. Institutional, as opposed to state-wide or multicampus approaches, although the interface between the institution and the larger entity to which it belonged could not be totally ignored. Academic, in the broad sense of dealing with policy questions and resource allocation, but with physical planning only tangentially, as it impacted upon academic decisions.

Brief Literature Review

During recent years, change has pervaded higher education institutions. A survey of over 1200 institutional presidents, found that over three-fourths of the respondents could identify a major change that had a significant impact on their institution (Hodgkinson, 1974). However, despite the realities of the environment, a subsequent study found that the planning efforts undertaken by institutions fared quite poorly.

Although presidents unanimously endorsed planning as necessary and desirable, academic plans, on the whole, were characterized by a rejection of the idea of scarcity and lack of connections to the decision-making process. (Cohen and March, 1974). Thus, although institutional leaders recognized the problem and albeit in a generalized manner indentified the tools with which to cope with the problem they, for the most part, have been unable to convert this knowledge into an operative academic plan.

In order to plan more successfully, institutions need a better understanding of those factors which contribute to the success or failure of their efforts. The recent literature on planning has been primarily descriptive rather than analytical. NCHEMS commissioned a series of four case studies in 1978, a project which appeared to be promising. However, upon publication this turned out to be merely an examination of the planing process documents rather than the process itself. (NCHEMS, 1978). The limited analytical literature available has tended to focus primarily on program budgeting, business techniques as applied to education, or the cost study approach. There is very little attention paid to a discussion of the interrelationship among value considerations, leadership, and participation. Indeed, most of the writing has totally ignored the political context within which such planning efforts have taken place.

Methodology

Preliminary research indicated that the case under consideration could be divided into three subcases based on three distinct chronological periods. Each period was distinct in approach, principal characters, and outcome. Each subcase was then individually evaluated along two dimensions--a product dimension and a process dimension.

The hypothesis was that performance along either dimension would be accounted for by three variables. These variables, which were identified

through an extensive review of the literature included: a clear conception of institutional mission, the level of faculty participation, and the quality of academic leadership. It was further hypothesized that one or more of these variables accounted for performance along a particular dimension more than along the other dimension.

The case study method was selected in order to provide sufficient detail and analysis to illuminate the complexities of the planning process. The decision to study an institution over time rather than comparing institutions, was based largely on two major considerations. First, since the object of this study was an in-depth analysis, there is some question whether a sufficiently thorough understanding of the political and administrative complexities of a second institution would have been possible. Without access to candid and sometimes sensitive information at other institutions it would have been impossible to duplicate the in-depth and critical analysis. Second, the institution selected offered the near ideal compromise. Since preliminary research indicated that there had been three major planning attempts over a relatively short period of time, it was possible to make comparisons within a relatively stable context.

Data for each case study was developed in three steps. The first was to discuss each subcase informally with persons who had been on campus during that time. This provided preliminary, although unfocused, information. The second step was to review the available written documents, including minutes of meetings, correspondence, reports, and newspaper accounts. Particularly for the first two subcases, there was extensive documentary material in the university archives, the planning committee files--which were still intact--and in individual personal files. This background information was used to produce a chronology of events, an

interview list, and a list of guiding questions for the interviews. The third step involved extensive interviews with participants. Almost thirty formal interviews were held, averaging over ninety minutes each. On a more informal basis, countless conversations were conducted with faculty, staff, and administrators over a several year period. These discussions contributed greatly to the overall understanding of the institution and the context in which planning efforts were taking place.

Definitions

There are almost as many definitions of planning as there are writers addressing the topic. Although there is a great deal of overlap and duplication, two viewpoints on planning emerge. The first, offered largely though not exclusively, by writers of the late 60's and very early 70's and by writers with a business orientation is essentially product oriented. This conception of planning focused on how to arrive at and what to do with a "plan". (Drucker, 1964).

Later writers and those writing with specific application to higher education modified this concept by focusing on the planning process (Banghart and Trull, 1973 and Halstead, 1974). As practice indicated that careful planning did not necessarily result in implementation, particular attention was paid to the development of criteria for evaluating planning effectiveness over time (Glenny and Weathersby, 1971).

This case study is interested in both of these dimensions of planning. The development of a final plan is important as the end product of the process, and as the mechanism against which to measure progress. However, the process itself, including the development and the implementation of the plan, is integral to the entire process.

The following are the operational definitions of these two dimensions

of planning as used in this study.

Dimension I, the product dimension, was primarily concerned with whether a plan was produced and implemented. The criteria which were used in evaluating a planning effort along this dimension included: were the goals clearly determined, the problems diagnosed, the options thoroughly examined, the possible solutions selected, and a plan of action determined? Although the focus along this dimension was primarily with the product, the mere writing of the plan was not sufficient to indicate success. The plan must have been, to some extent, successfully related to the ongoing life of the institution. However, there was no attempt to evaluate the long term outcomes of the changes instituted.

Dimension II focused on the process. A planning process was evaluated along Dimension II by ascertaining its value to the institution. The criteria used included: Did the process serve to educate the university community to the existing possiblilities and constraints? Did it foster an acceptance of the concept of planning in general and of this process in particular?

Institutional Mission - For purposes of this study, institutional mission was defined as the compendium of values and priorities of the institution. The issues which an institution must face in this regard are staggering. Some of them include a delineation of the constituencies served; the balance between teaching, research and service (Kerr, 1963 and 1972) and an outline of institutional role as a professional school, liberal arts college, graduate center, etc. (Baldridge, 1971a and 1971b). Although virtually all institutions have "mission statements", they all too often are authored for public relations purposes, rather than being a thorough look at the institution, its present and future.

A review of the literature on institutional mission and goal develop-

ment raised several questions useful for evaluating the development of institutional mission. These questions form the core of the operational definition of institutional mission as used in this study.

Has the institution reached broad agreement on its mission?

Has the institution resolved the conflict among goals?

Has the institution been able to move from ideal goals to realistic goals capable of implementation?

There is ample evidence in the literature that mission definition is not an easy task for institutions. Several authors describe the splits within and among goals as both fundamental and inevitable (Baldridge, 1971, and Kerr, 1963), springing from the fact of competing pulls on an institution as it attempts to adhere to expectations of its "backers" in government and society, while at the same time trying not to stray too far from internal assumptions and expectations (Richman and Farmer, 1974).

Faculty Participation - The political environment of the university as well as the traditional role of the faculty in shaping academic programs argues for a higher level of faculty involvement than may be necessary in other types of organizations. The literature offers several good reasons for including faculty in the planning process.

First, planning is an opportunity to familiarize faculty with internal administrative problems and priorities as well as with external constraints imposed by local, statewide or federal regulation. This continuous communication forces both faculty and administrators to recognize diverse points of view and conflicting interests. Faculty participation in planning is, therefore, an education process which should be viewed as a long term investment (Lindblom, 1959).

A second reason for faculty participation stems from the fact that

planning suggests change, and that change and innovation by their very nature are threatening. By actively engaging faculty in the planning process, the number of unknown factors can be reduced, and resistance to change can be reduced by relieving real or perceived threats to autonomy and security. Participants will view the project as their own if they have participated in diagnosing the problem and have agreed on the definitions and importance of the problem and adopted the solution by group decision. (Watson, 1969).

The issue of faculty participation presents the planner with two problems. The first, is how to identify faculty with the ability to exert a leadership role during planning and implementation. Lindquist described the ideal faculty participant as a "cosmopolitan local", a person who has an extensive network of external contacts, yet is esteemed and influential in campus governace groups, and is often an opinion leader. He concludes that the extent to which planners can recruit a core of faculty able and willing to exert a leadership role in the implementation process may prove to be a key to successful planning. (Lindquist, 1974).

The second problem is how to structure the process to assure the optimal utilization of the participants. Faculty participation in planning has been studied along three dimensions: the type of committee structure; the degree of faculty/administration integration; and the amount of faculty participation. In most cases, planning was accomplished through the existing committee structures where it had to compete for attention among the array of items generally handled through this structure; that faculty and administrators participated seperately and; that faculty participation was generally light and regarded as peripheral. Recommendations to address these problems have included joint planning committees to

provide a mechanism for communication between faculty and administrators and to focus attention on planning, and; steps to assure that participation in planning be considered a legitimate part of the faculty roles, and be recognized in the criteria for faculty promotions (Paola, Lehmann and Blischke, 1971).

The following questions form the core of an operatonal definition of faculty participation as used in this study.

Is the level of participation appropriately based on historical practice, organizational structure and the desirability of using the planning process as a tool to educate faculty?

Has a cadre of faculty members been cultivated who will be useful to the process?

Is there a structure that assures that faculty input is not merely reactive, and that participation is active and meaningful?

Leadership - A fully developed discussion of leadership in a university must be placed within the context of the relevant organizational/governance models. Unfortunately, this discussion is beyond the scope of this short paper.

In the literature, essentially three perspectives on leadership emerge. Although they do not represent all perspectives on leadership, they are useful in understanding the role of the leader as planner. The first, is the planner as manipulator, using power in a "mechanistic" sense. This approach portrays the planner as retiring to his/her office and developing a plan in a technical sense (Temkin, 1972). This model is inappropriate to the university due to its peculiar organizational structure and diffuse power pattern. The second concept of leadership (Neustadt, 1960) points out that even in a hierarchy, power and authority are not as simple as they seem. This perspective emphasizes the importance

of personal influence.

The third concept of leadership was developed by futuristic writers (Bennis, 1966 and Mosher, 1971), who describe the future organizational model as an adhocracy. Their description of an adhocracy has many of the same attributes as a university; decentralization, increased participation, specialization and professionalism. The essence of leadership in such an organizational structure is stimulative and collaborative rather than directive.

It is difficult to formulate an operational definition of leadership in the university setting. However, it is quite clear that leadership is more than issuing an order and having it carried out. Leaders must command considerable persuasive powers, and be able to function in an environment in which specialists, i.e. faculty, can make legitimate claim to having superior expertise in some areas.

Analysis

The case study institution was a well established graduate/research university. It was one of the several "flagship" campuses within a major state system. It experienced significant programmatic and physical growth throughout the late sixties and the seventies. During the period under study, the institution enrolled approximately 23,000 students, roughly divided into 14,000 undergraduates, 4,000 evening students and 5,000 graduate and professional students. Major programs were available in close to one hundred fields, through the Faculties of Arts and Letters, Natural Science and Mathematics, Social Sciences Education and ten professional schools. There was also a large Division of Continuing Education.

Each of the two major divisions, Health Sciences and Academic Affairs was headed by a Vice President, who reported directly to the

president. In general the academic structure was quite traditional, with department heads or program directors reporting to Deans, who then reported to the appropriate vice president. Over the decade under consideration, there was a great deal of movement at the Dean level and within the position of Vice President for Academic Affairs. During this time, however, the president and the Vice President for Health Sciences remained constant.

1972-1974 - Shortly after the appointment of a new president, a Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) was recruited with a specific mandate to produce an academic plan. Over the next three years, the university was to become involved in what were essentially three separate attempts to develop this plan. The first attempt consisted of a draft personally developed by the VPAA. However, it was soundly rejected by the Deans and Provosts, who in turn, set out to develop their own plan. However, after several drafts, they were unable to reach any agreement. The third effort was initiated by the Faculty Senate as a result of frustration at being left out of the process. This effort, which took over a year, produced an official document. However, it was vague and had no impact on the university community.

The university make no progress in developing a consensus on institutional mission as a result of this planning effort. The VPAA's articulation of institutional mission was divergent from the prevailing norm in the academic world in general and that institution in particular. The Deans and Provosts and the Faculty Senate focused within a very narrow range, and were preoccupied with process. The effort was further characterized by almost no faculty participation until late in the process, and a basic disagreement on what the desireable role of the faculty in academic planning should be. The VPAA's personal style,

concept of administrative resonsibility and view of the university worked against his being able to serve as an effective leader.

At the end of this time, the VPAA had severely strained relationships with the Deans, the faculty and the president, resulting in his resignation. The university community was torn by differing opinions on the nature of academic planning, the appropriate roles for the different constituent groups and even on what constituted a proper time frame. The period ended not only without producing a plan, but with significant costs incurred by the breakdown of the planning process.

1975-1976 - After the resignation of the VPAA, the university did not have a permanent VPAA for two years. Nevertheless, the president was determined to develop a plan. In an effort to avoid the mistakes of 1972-1974, the president decided to retain control over this process himself, at least at the beginning.

The mechanism the president selected was to appoint a "blue ribbon" committee of faculty, with faculty members as cochairs. This committee was appointed by the president, and was to be advisory to him. The committee undertook an ambitious and extensive study of the university. They ultimately produced two documents, an interim report, which aroused a great controversy on campus, and a final report.

This planning process also lacked a clear sense of institutional mission. Although the president offered his personal view of the mission in a separate document, and the Committee tried to define specific elements of institutional mission, subsequent events indicated that the stated mission did not represent a consensus. It also was judged as having an insufficient amount of faculty participation. Although the planning committee was mostly faculty, it was a small group, and did not

adopt a widespread consultative or participatory process . Leadership within the committee was exerted by both the president and the co-chairs. However, when deliberations entered the forum of the entire university, the leadership of the co-chairs was insufficient and presidential leadership lapsed.

Although this process produced a plan, there was widespread agreement that no recommendations of the plan were implemented. On the process dimension, this planning effort recieved mixed evaluations. Interviewees pointed out that the process had educated people to the reality of limited resources, created a cadre of persons knowledgeable about the university, and served as a basis for future plans. However, the costs of another failed effort at planning, in terms of the perceived credibility of future planning efforts were high.

1976-1980 - The most recent planning efforts studied were very closely identified with the new VPAA who arrived on campus in the fall of 1976. Prior to his appointment, this Vice President, like his predessor several years earlier, was assigned the task of developing an academic plan.

Soon after arriving on campus, the VPAA appointed a small number of task forces to advise him in selected areas. While these panels were deliberating, the office of Academic Affairs would be reviewing suggestions of priorities from previous plans. The new VPAA emphasized that this planning cycle was to benefit from the suggestions and evaluations of the previous President's Committee on Academic Planning, refining and challenging them and developing alternatives where necessary.

This effort resulted in an academic plan which had fairly wide consensus on campus. There was general agreement that the VPAA had been an effective leader, willing to consult with various groups and make

	Sub case I	Sub case II	Sub case III
Major Planning Activity	Personal planning by VPAA Academic Affairs Council Faculty Senate Efforts	"Blue Ribbon Committee consisting of faculty, administrators and students--appointed by the president and advisory to him	Developed a consultative plan
Key Participant	VPAA Deans and Provosts Faculty Senate appointed committee	Two co-chairs of the "Blue Ribbon Committee" In later stages the President and the Faculty Senate	the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Major Event or Result	draft document developed-later rejected by the Deans and Provosts draft document-lack of consensus final document produced-too late to have any impact on the process	Two documents, an Interim Report, and a final report neither had much impact	Plan completed in three years Fairly widespread consensus on campus Some evidence of implementation

the best possible use of the Deans in the planning process. However, there was only limited participation by average faculty. Although the sense of institutional mission was considered vague - relying heavily on statements contained in previous documents - it caused little or no reaction.

This plan was the only one developed during this period which was technically capable of implementation. It was the VPAA's own plan and was written in terms (student/faculty ratios) that he was able to control through his budgetary power. This approach might have worked had he remained in office. However, he left campus for another position before he had time to implement the plan.

Most interviewees felt that this planning process had been beneficial to the university, if only because the institution had completed a major planning effort without having experienced a major trauma. Others pointed out that the consultative process educated persons to internal and external contraints.

The results and/or conclusions are based only on the research conducted at a single institution and have, therefore, limited applicability. However, they provide interesting points for further research at other institutions.

- In the absence of all three variables a clear sense of institutional mission, faculty participation, and appropriate leadership--there is little probability of long term success at either developing and implementing a plan (Dimension I) or using the planning process for purposes of ongoing institutional development (Dimension II).
- Faculty participation and administrative leadership affect the planning effort along Dimension II. Further research is necessary

	Sub case I	Sub case II	Sub case III
LEADERSHIP	VPAA's personal style, concept of administrative responsibility and view of the university worked against his being able to serve as an effective leader.	While the forum was the committee itself, leadership had been exerted by both the president and the co-chairs. When deliberations entered the the forum of the entire university, the leadership of the co-chairs was insufficient and presidential leadership lapsed.	Agreement that the VPAA had been an effective leader. He was willing to consult with various goups, and to make the best possible use of the Deans in the planning process.
PARTICIPATION	Low level of faculty participation A basic disagreement on what the desireable role of the faculty in academic planning should be.	The amount and nature of faculty participation was insufficient. - although mostly faculty, the PCAP was a small group - the PCAP did not develop a widespread consultative or participatory process - PCAP members had been selected in the President's office with limited involment by the Faculty Senate	High degree of participation by Deans Limited participation by average faculty
MISSION	VPAA's articulation of institutional mission was divergent from the prevailing norm of the of the academic world in general and the university in particular. The Deans and Provosts were unable to articulate a university mission due to their pre-occupation with process. The Collegium focused within a very narrow range.	The president offered his personal view of the mission of the university in his statement, The University: Its Purpose and Fulfillment PCAP specifically tried to define the elements of the institutional mission. Events surrounding the release of the Interim Report indicated that this mission statement did not represent a consensus.	Sense of institutional mission was vague--relied largely on statements contained in previous documents --little or no effort to rethink the basis for them or to build consensus. There was little or no reaction to the mission statement

in order to determine the appropriate level of each variable or the best mechanisms to be employed.

- Since each of the planning efforts under consideration were characterized by the lack of a clear mission statement, this research did not provide any insight into the impact of institutional mission along either dimension. Perhaps research at those institutions which are marked by a clear institutional mission, particularly limited mission, private institutions, may be helpful.

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